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RUCNMEM/EU MEMBER STATES COLLECTIVE
RUEHAK/AMEMBASSY ANKARA 5875
RUEHBJ/AMEMBASSY BEIJING 3583
RUEHKO/AMEMBASSY TOKYO 3442
RUEHIT/AMCONSUL ISTANBUL 4117
RHEHNSC/NSC WASHDC
RHMCSUU/CDR USCENTCOM MACDILL AFB FL
RUEAIIA/CIA WASHDC
RHEFDIA/DIA WASHDC
RUEKJCS/JOINT STAFF WASHDC
RUEKJCS/SECDEF WASHINGTON DC
RUEHVEN/USMISSION USOSCE 4079
RUCNDT/USMISSION USUN NEW YORK 1243
RUCPDOG/DEPT OF COMMERCE WASHDC
RHEBAAA/DEPT OF ENERGY WASHDC
RUEATRS/DEPT OF TREASURY WASHDC

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 ASHGABAT 001444

SIPDIS

STATE FOR SCA/CEN; MED

E.O. 12958: DECL: 11/10/2019

TAGS: [AMED](#) [KFLU](#) [PGOV](#) [SOCI](#) [TX](#) [UP](#)

SUBJECT: TURKMENISTAN: FIGHTING THE FLU WITH RASPBERRIES,
HONEY, AND HORSERADISH

REF: A. KYIV 1915

[1](#)B. ASHGABAT 1421

Classified By: Charge d'Affaires Sylvia Reed Curran. Reasons 1.4 (B) and (D).

[1](#)1. (C) SUMMARY: In recent days, a Turkmen state-run newspaper published two articles about methods for treating and preventing flu. The Turkmen Government appears to have changed its approach slightly by using the word "flu" for the first time publicly, but the natural remedies they recommend give the impression that the illness is not serious. The Ministry of Health has had internal meetings, but they have yet to publish information about preventative measures such as washing hands that could help people stay healthy. END SUMMARY.

[1](#)2. (SBU) Turkmenistan's state-run newspaper, Neytralniy Turkmenistan, published articles on November 7 and 9 titled "Flu: Treatment and Prevention" and "Popular Remedies for Flu and Colds," that explained steps people could take to prevent and treat the flu. One of the most striking parts of the articles was the use of the word flu in the titles, a word that previously had been eschewed by the newspaper staff. All previous articles only mentioned serious respiratory illnesses or colds. The newspaper articles did not mention the type of flu, leaving readers with the impression that they were describing the normal seasonal flu, in particular because both articles said it was difficult to distinguish between a cold and the flu, and that most symptoms could be alleviated with home remedies.

[1](#)3. (U) As in Ukraine (Ref A), the Turkmen Government is providing people with information about natural remedies for colds and flu, but not telling them to take medication. In fact, the November 9 article noted that aspirin could be dangerous for children, so raspberries were a much better solution for reducing fever. The articles suggested eating fresh raspberries or raspberry jam, or making tea with raspberries. They also noted that to help cure the flu, rose

hips and honey could be added to tea, and, as an added benefit, they contain vitamins. For a cold, one article suggested taking two teaspoons a day of horseradish mixed with lemon juice. Apparently this will elicit tears for the first week of treatment, but after that the nasal passages should be clear.

¶4. (U) The newspaper articles also provided tips for preventing the flu. Onion and garlic were foremost among these remedies, supposedly because they contain natural antibiotics. The articles also mentioned that before leaving home people should apply Oksolin ointment, baby lotion, or even vaseline to their nostrils. They also should carry a scarf with some lavender oil sprinkled on it, which if they held up to their nose from time to time, especially around people who were coughing or sneezing, would help kill the microbes. People were also warned to stay away from dusty places, since viruses reside in dust.

¶5. (U) After all of these natural remedies, both articles concluded with sage advice. The last paragraph of the November 7 article said that it is easier to prevent a disease than to cure it. The last paragraph of the November 9 article noted that these natural remedies were helpful for mild cases of the flu, but should be used in addition to other recommendations by a doctor. In the middle of one of the paragraphs, the November 7 article said that people with a fever should stay in bed and rest, and drink lots of fluids.

¶6. (C) According to a local embassy employee whose relative
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works for the Ministry of Health, the Ministry met on Sunday November 8 to provide information to Ministry employees about the respiratory illness that is affecting many Turkmen. Once again, they did not say that this disease was H1N1 (Ref B), but they said that this disease most affects those between the ages of 20-34, as well as people with weakened immune systems, such as pregnant women.

¶7. (C) COMMENT: The Turkmen Government is still covering up the seriousness of the flu epidemic in Turkmenistan. It publishes some information about colds and flu, indicating that it is aware that by now almost all Turkmen know that there is a problem, but what they are publishing will not give people the knowledge they need to protect themselves. The useful nuggets of information are hidden within text filled with recipes for raspberry tea and various uses for pine needle oil. The newspaper articles did not even mention that people should wash their hands or stay away from crowds as preventive measures. Once again, the government is maintaining tight control over information, at the expense of public welfare. END COMMENT.
CURRAN